Ian Shanahan (4.12.1993)

– To Robert Allworth

For Simon Docking to play:

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Arc of Light

for

solo (concert grand) piano

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PROGRAMME ANNOTATION

Arc of Light

for solo piano

Ian Shanahan (4.12.1993)

Dispersed sunlight, refracted through atmospheric raindrops = a rainbow = an **Arc** {of The Covenant [Jewish Mythology]} **of Light**, that "immense arc of light which touches the earth and makes it sing" (Arp).

This unassuming little piece – brief and deliberately rather straightforward, to entice the timid – is an offshoot of my recent trio **Lines of Light: Seven Improvisations on *αιθερος μελος*** (similarly concerned with rainbows) in that it derives from the same harmonic fields, and possesses roughly comparable macrotemporal proportions. (Indeed, it would be ideal if both pieces could be programmed within the same concert...)

Arc of Light is gratefully dedicated to my dear friend and colleague, the composer and CD producer Robert Allworth, who was responsible for the work's 'Genesis'. Robert telephoned me on December 4, and an amusing dialogue ensued:

"Ian, I'm producing another CD and would love to include a short piano piece of yours ... say, about two minutes long. Do you have one available?"

"Sorry, Robert – No, I haven't..."

"Could you write one then, and deliver it to me today?"

[stunned silence fills a very uncomfortable pause, while I reflect upon my usual tortuously slow rate of composition] ... *"Yes!"* (And three hours later, I completed my '**Arc**'!)

Anyway, **Arc of Light** is a contemplative study in *time*, *resonance*, and *colour* – hopefully not too difficult to perform. While writing this compact work, I had the talented young Australian pianist Simon Docking in mind to première and record it.

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PERFORMANCE NOTES

CHRONOMORPHOLOGY, AND INTERPRETATION

Arc of Light is presented entirely in ***time-space notation***, with each numbered 'ictus' corresponding to *one second, or slightly more* of elapsed time – although a reasonable degree of executative freedom is permissible here, even desirable. Therefore, musical events should be deployed chronometrically in direct proportion to their relative horizontal placement upon the score-page: an electronic metronome flashing once per second might prove to be an effective practice tool in this respect. Yet any sense of metricated rigidity is strongly discouraged! (It might be worthwhile in this regard to observe that durations of resonances are all *unequal*: so, complete temporal *asymmetry* ought to be strived for.) Within this time-framework, ***grace-note groups*** are to be played 'as quickly as possible', or at the very least quite rapidly; ***beams*** define 'connected events' (phrases).

All ***pedalling*** is well-specified, as are all nuances of ***dynamic level***, from "*p poss.*" (as soft as possible) to "*f poss.*" (as loud as possible). Please respect these instructions. Also, *suggestions* are made for ***the disposition of the hands***.

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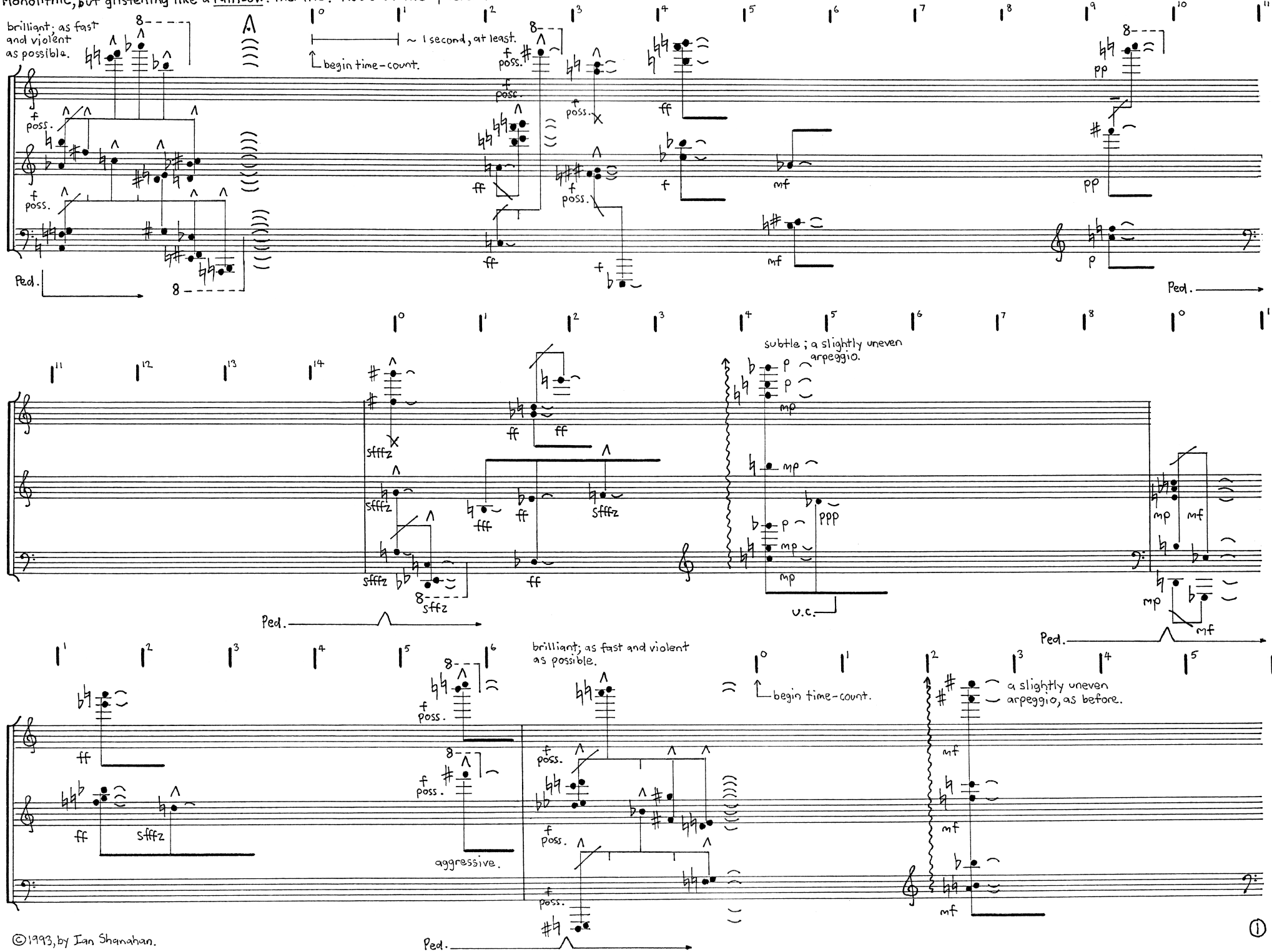
***Arc of Light**, commissioned by Robert Allworth, was premièred by Simon Docking at The Old Darlington School, the University of Sydney, on 14 August 1994.*

*Two recordings of **Arc of Light**, played by Simon Docking and Roger Dean, are now commercially available on the Compact Discs "Australian Music for Film: Remembering Adrian Braun" and "Lines of Light" (Broad Music Records Jade JAD CD 1073 and JAD CD 1091, respectively). The score has been published by Grevillea Editions (The Yitpi Series [ISBN 1-876266-54-6]), Maybole via Ben Lomond, NSW, Australia.*

Arc of Light

Monolithic, but glistening like a rainbow: hieratic. "Music of the Spheres".



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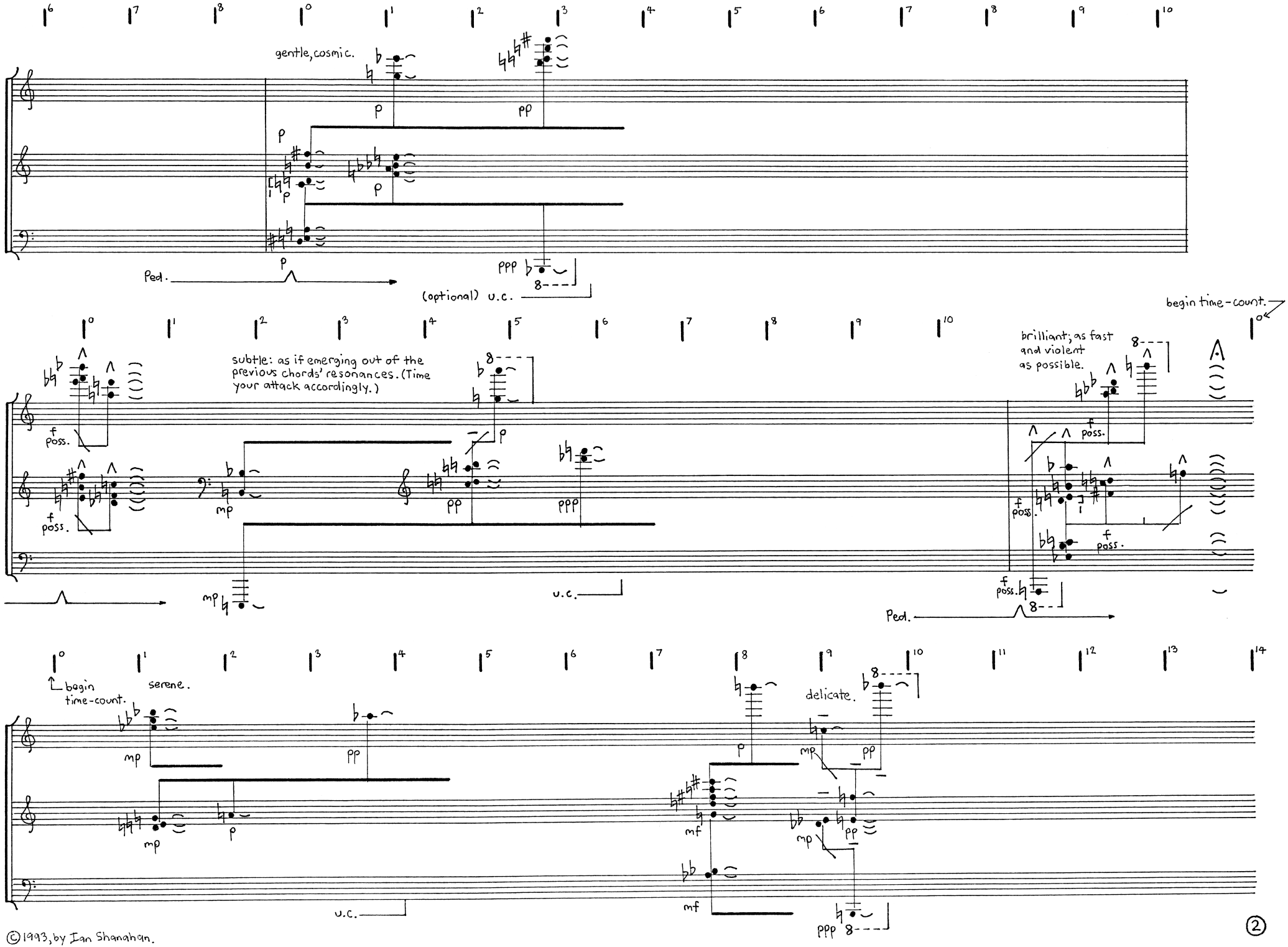

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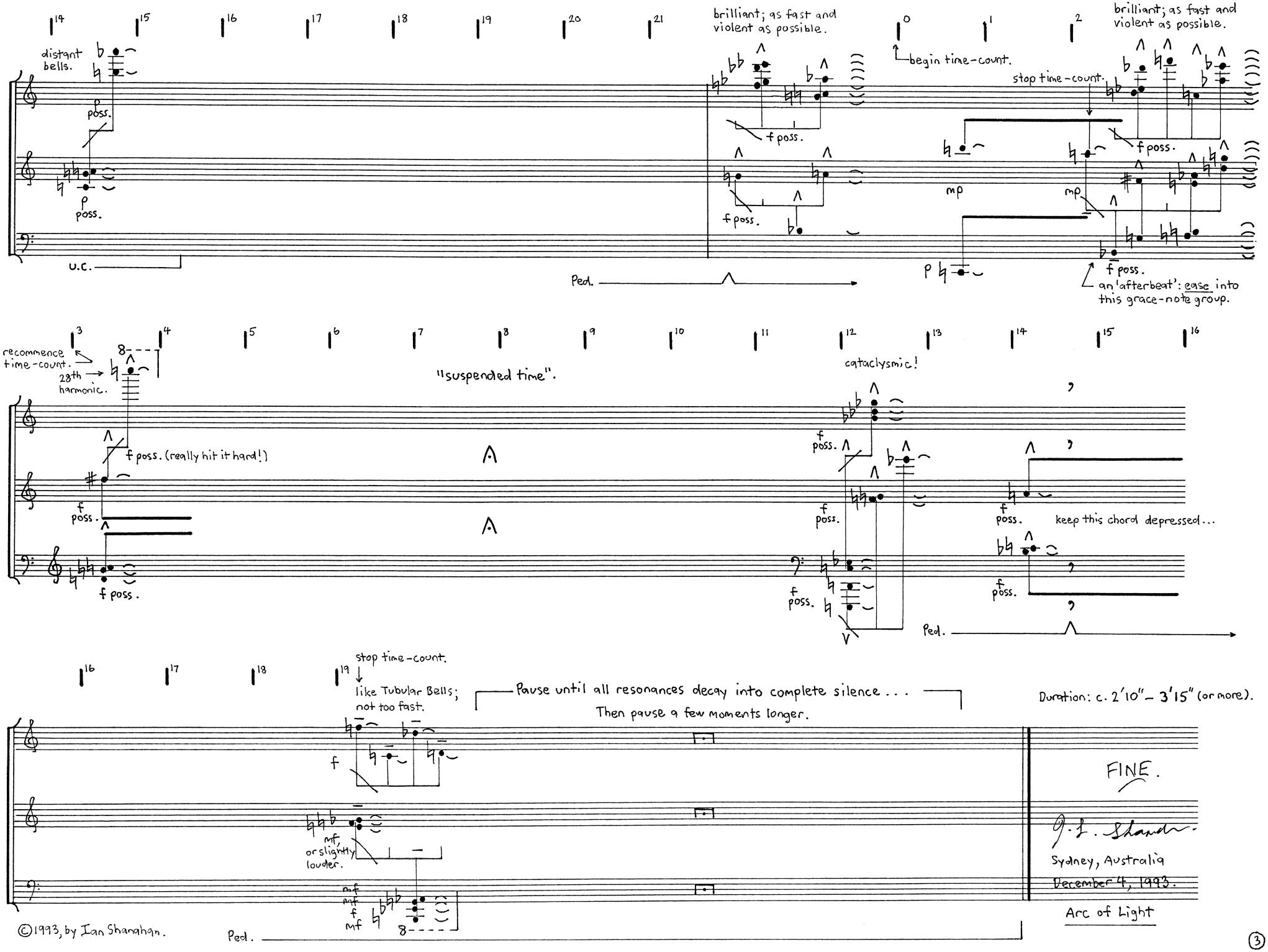
distant bells.
p poss.
p poss.
U.C.
brilliant; as fast and violent as possible.
f poss.
f poss.
Ped.
begin time-count.
stop time-count.
mp
mp
p
f poss.
f poss.
an 'afterbeat': ease into this grace-note group.
brilliant; as fast and violent as possible.
recommence time-count.
28th harmonic.
f poss. (really hit it hard!)
f poss.
f poss.
"suspended time".
cataclysmic!
f poss.
f poss.
f poss.
f poss.
f poss.
keep this chord depressed...
Ped.
stop time-count.
like Tubular Bells; not too fast.
f
mf, or slightly louder.
mf
mf
f
mf
8
Pause until all resonances decay into complete silence . . .
Then pause a few moments longer.
Duration: c. 2'10" – 3'15" (or more).
FINE.
Sydney, Australia
December 4, 1993.
Arc of Light
©1993, by Ian Shanahan.
Ped.